PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee
Bob Stump, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 14, 2002

CONTACT
Ryan Vaart
Meghan Wedd
(202) 225-2539

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP
POSTURE HEARING ON U.S. SPACE COMMAND
AND JOINT FORCES COMMAND

Today, the committee meets to receive testimony regarding the posture of military forces under the commanders-in-chief of U.S. Space Command and Joint Forces Command.

Both of these commands have critical homeland defense responsibilities and have been extraordinarily active since the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

General Eberhart, General Kernan -- welcome.

This hearing comes at a critical juncture with respect to how the Department of Defense will re-organize itself to cope with new homeland defense responsibilities. Secretary Rumsfeld has outlined his proposal to establish a new "Northern" command with primary responsibility for homeland security, which would have far reaching implications for NORAD and Joint Forces Command. While I understand that this proposal is still in draft form, I hope we can gain a better understanding of what it will mean for your respective commands during our discussion today.

Since the events of last September, NORAD aircraft have been continuously flying in support of Operation NOBLE EAGLE over the skies of America. However, the question of how long we can sustain this pace of operations and what impact it is having on the combat edge of the Air Force is very much on the mind the committee

The hearing today is also timely with respect to the deployment of nearly 1,700 National Guardsmen in title 10 status to the nation's borders to assist Federal law enforcement. While we understand that this is to be a temporary mission, National Guardsmen have been performing similar law enforcement support in title 32 status for years. General Kernan, the committee would value your insight into the mission that these soldiers will perform and how it fits into the larger civil support responsibilities of Joint Forces Command.

###